

October 7, 1996

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SUBJECT: **Deputy Secretary's Focus Report**

The following is a brief summary of Department of Transportation events and items of interest from the past month:

### **OPERATIONAL ITEMS:**

#### **SR 2/DIVISION STREET STAGE 2 WRAPPING UP**

The two-year effort on Spokane's Division Street/Stage 2 is nearing final completion. This phase, from Euclid Avenue to Wellesley Avenue, added new northbound and southbound lanes. This is the second phase of a three-phase job to add capacity to Spokane's only north/south state highway. The final phase of the \$35 million project gets underway in Spring 1997 with work from Queen to Francis Avenues.

#### **NEW LANE MARKERS TO BE TRIED ON I-90**

This fall, the South Central Region will try two test sections of plowable lane markers on I-90. Both sections will be placed on the centerline. The first section is near MP 92.5 eastbound as you near the Elk Heights interchange. This section will place a plowable lane marker every 80 ft. for approximately 1 mile. These markers are Knightsight SP markers. The second section will be westbound just over the summit at Hyak, and will be near MP 49. The second section will use a flexible marker called Snoflex and will represent about a 1/2 mile test section.

With the heavy traffic on I-90, the painted centerline stripe can scrub away in less than two weeks. In past years, we have tried a recessed epoxy centerline stripe that offers good daytime visibility, but offers very little nighttime visibility, especially when wet. The above two test markers will allow snowplows to cross directly over them, and still stick up above the roadway surface approximately 3/4 of an inch.

#### **SR 16 JACKSON AVENUE ON RAMP RESTRICTION BEGINS**

The Olympic Region began on October 1 an experimental restriction of the Jackson Avenue on ramp to westbound State Route 16 during afternoon peak traffic hours. Between 3 p.m. and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday, access to the on ramp will be limited to transit and carpools of two or more persons. WSDOT is coordinating with Washington State Patrol on enforcement of the restriction.

The goal of the three-month experiment is to ease congestion in the Jackson Avenue neighborhood, while at the same time improve traffic flow onto the Narrows Bridge. Traffic monitoring will be done throughout the test period. Another public meeting will be held in January 1997 to determine whether the restriction should be continued.

#### **EAST WENATCHEE RIVERFRONT TRAIL OPEN**

The East Wenatchee Riverfront Trail was officially opened Saturday, September 7, with North Central Region Administrator, Don Senn, participating in the ribbon cutting. This recently completed half-mile section is tied to the ten-mile Apple Capital Recreation Loop trail system. The twelve-foot wide paved trail runs through the concrete abutments of the Columbia River Bridge on SR97A. Roughly \$350,000 of the \$640,000 cost was funded by an intermodal surface transportation and efficiency act grant (ISTEA). The remainder of the money was supplied by transportation improvement board matching funds and the City of East Wenatchee.

#### **NEW LINK TO MILL PLAIN BOULEVARD WILL BE COMPLETED**

A western extension to Mill Plain Boulevard has the \$24 million it needs to be completed. This new road is expected to absorb much of the heavy truck traffic on Fourth Plain Boulevard. The additional link between the port and I-5 will help create many jobs because the additional access will make the port property more attractive. Before construction can begin next fall, the state must purchase 83 properties, which range in size from a small strip of land in front of a house to an 83-unit apartment complex. The Southwest Region began the acquisition and relocation efforts this month, on behalf of the City of Vancouver which will manage the construction effort.

#### **WAC 468-86 RECEIVES REVIEW & COMMENTS AT HEARING**

The WAC 468-86 subcommittee met on Monday, September 9, 1996, to review the comments received at the recent WAC 468-86 *RTPO Planning Standards and Guidelines* hearing. The committee suggested that much of the language be moved out of the WAC 468-86 and place it in the RTPO guide book. A presentation of these suggested changes will occur during the full MPO/RTPO/WSDOT coordinating committee in late November or early December. Depending on that discussion, the WSDOT Planning Office will schedule a final hearing on the WAC for early winter 1997.

#### **OUM/PSRC WORKING TOWARD A SIX-YEAR ACTION STRATEGY**

The Office of Urban Mobility (OUM) has been working with the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in the development of a regional six year action strategy. OUM's focus is to provide coordination and consistency with WSDOT's Six Year Plan development. The PSRC effort will result in an adopted six year transportation strategy for the central Puget Sound region by December 1996. As part of this effort, the PSRC developed a six point regional position statement supporting WSDOT's Six-Year Plan and revenue enhancement for state and local needs, which was sent to the Transportation Commission.

#### **HOUSE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE HEARS HOV REPORT**

A joint presentation on the state HOV program was made to the House Transportation Committee on September 19th by the Office of Urban Mobility, Program Management, Northwest Region Traffic Operations, the State Patrol, and Commissioner Connie Niva. The discussions focused on the status of the core HOV program, its performance, enforcement, and the commission's recently adopted statewide freeway HOV policy. Of the 304 miles of core HOV freeway lanes, 135 miles are now open to traffic, 56 miles are under construction, or soon will be, and 113 miles are unfunded for design or construction. Assuming a fast-track implementation scenario—getting all projects underway in the next 10 years—it would take \$1.5 billion to complete the HOV core lanes.

## **FAST CORRIDOR UNDER DEVELOPMENT**

The Office of Urban Mobility, in conjunction with the Puget Sound Regional Council, is undertaking the development of a Freight Action Strategy for the Everett-Seattle-Tacoma corridor under the auspices of the FAST Corridor Project. The purpose of the FAST Corridor Project is to develop a strategy— identifying a combination of projects— that will optimize freight movement capacity and local roadway traffic within the corridor. The three objectives of the project include:

1. Update data on freight demand flows.
2. Identify specific projects to improve port access, local circulation and provide grade separation at strategic locations.
3. Identify specific projects to address roadway bottlenecks.

The final product of the study will include a public information piece describing the freight mobility problem within the corridor and the strategy to solve the problem with the associated costs. To kick-off the project, OUM convened an all-day meeting with representatives from the railroads, WSDOT's Rail Branch, affected public agencies, and local jurisdictions.

## **"SRview" RECEIVING RAVE REVIEWS**

SRview, the new videolog on PC application, continues to draw excellent reviews and support from all who have seen it demonstrated. The Data Operations Branch has also put together a pilot on the Internet (internal) so that those who have Mac's can also access SRview. The Branch is continuing to work with MIS to develop the appropriate method for state-wide deployment.

## **"CONNECTIONS" CONFERENCE HOSTED BY WSDOT**

The Environmental Affairs Office organized and hosted a national conference titled, "Connections: Transportation, Wetlands, and the Natural Environment." The conference brought together scientists, policy-makers, engineers, and others to share ideas about balancing transportation demands, environmental protection, and other societal needs. Many state DOT's were represented, as were FHWA and all the major environmental regulatory agencies.

Introductory and keynote speakers included WSDOT Secretary Sid Morrison, State Senator Margarita Prentice, former FHWA Administrator Thomas Larson, and WSDOT Transportation Commissioner Connie Niva. On the final day of the conference, action plans were developed in a number of areas for continuing partnerships among the participants.

## **WETLANDS MONITORING COMPLETED**

The Wetlands Monitoring Program has successfully completed the ninth year of collecting data on wetland mitigation sites. The majority of our sites are doing well and should have no problem meeting compliance at the five year point mark as required by permits. At least three sites have already surpassed all requirements in just their third year. The monitoring section will work with the various permitting agencies to possibly get an early sign-off on those three sites. If we are successful, it translates to a \$30,000 savings for the Department.

## **CRACK CLOSES PARKER BRIDGE**

On September 18, bridge preservation inspectors closed the Parker Bridge, a Yakima County bridge over the Yakima River after finding a full height crack in a girder web. The

bridge is a steel, two girder fracture critical bridge where failure of one girder could result in the collapse of the bridge. The inspection was being conducted by bridge preservation inspectors through a reimbursable agreement with Yakima County. The County Engineer was notified immediately after the bridge was closed to traffic. The county is presently studying options for repair of the bridge.

#### **VASHON PROJECT AWARDED**

The project to close the main slip for replacement of the transfer span bridge has been awarded. Construction is scheduled for the Winter of 1996-1997. The auxiliary slip will remain open, but the terminal will not be able to accommodate two vessels at the dock at one time. The closure will occur in January/February 1997.

#### **WSF PEDESTRIAN PROJECT WILL INCREASE ACCESSIBILITY**

The Seattle Pedestrian Access Replacement Project will provide two new elevators and a new staircase making the passenger level of the terminal ADA accessible. Construction should begin in November.

#### **ANACORTES PROJECT SAILING SMOOTHLY**

The current focus is concluding the technical reports for the multimodal and terminal access projects and preparing for application for the shoreline permit. Public meetings presenting the preferred design alternatives were held September 25th and 26th. Under a current law budget this project will go to the shelf in Fall 1997 after completion of PS&E for the first phase.

#### **VESSEL PROJECTS CONTINUE TO PROGRESS**

##### **M.V. KITSAP:**

Dry-docked at Todd to repair grounding damage. Major damage limited to rudder steering engine and rudder attachments. Anticipate repairs to be completed by October 20th.

##### **M.V. HIYU:**

Routing dry-docking completed at Todd.

##### **M.V. KALEETAN:**

Dockside availability awarded to AK-WA and consists of hull painting and deck steel replacement..

##### **M.V. ISSAQUAH:**

Dockside contract awarded to MINI for miscellaneous piping repairs. Schedule dependent on completion of KITSAP repairs.

##### **M.V. CHELAN:**

Movable second deck installation and SOLAS upgrade has been advertised with a late November bid opening presently planned.

**Steel Electric class propulsion control procurement (ILLAHEE, QUINAULT, NISQUALLY):** Contract awarded to Siemens. Siemens is developing design in preparation for November delivery of NISQUALLY to shipyard. WSF contract management team will move to the shipyard at the end of October.

#### **WSF UNION EMPLOYEES WILL RECEIVE PAY RAISE**

The OPEIU has ratified the 1995 - 1997 collective bargaining agreement. The membership should be receiving their 4% retro checks by October 25th.

### **NEW TRACKING CAPABILITY COULD SAVE MONEY**

A private vendor has successfully demonstrated the capability of tracking ferry vessels throughout the normal operating waters of Puget Sound and San Juan Islands at relatively low costs. The applicability of this kind of technology to multiple management and customer information needs is being assessed. In addition, a USCG Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) device was placed on board the SEALTH in a successful test of VT automated tracking capability.

### **FERRY PROPOSALS SUBMITTED**

Passenger-Only ferry final proposals were received August 23rd. Three of the four proposals received contained errors and/or omissions which necessitated resubmission. In addition, price increases have created budget problems. Those who submitted proposals in August have been requested to submit proposed cost reductions by September 27th. These will be reviewed and new final proposals will be received by October 21st.

### **CERTIFICATION & PROGRAM REVIEW COMPLETE**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) conducted WSDOT's DBE Certification and Program Review from September 9 -13. The first three days were spent reviewing the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises' (OMWBE's) Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) certification plan, methods and files. FHWA's findings showed a need for better communication of FHWA guideline updates and a closer working relationship with External Civil Rights Branch (ECRB) to bring OMWBE into compliance with FHWA DBE certification procedures. The last two days of the review were spent reviewing WSDOT's DBE program activities.

### **WSDOT TAKING ACTION ON VIOLATION OF CONTRACT**

WSDOT entered into a Stipulation and Agreed Order with Robison Construction for violating the terms of the state contract. Robison is to provide \$250,000 in additional minority and women's business enterprises (MWBE) work (\$125,000 MBE and \$125,000 WBE) and voluntarily refrain from bidding for a period of 60 days. This agreement was approved and entered into on September 11, 1996. On Wednesday, September 25, 1996, we received information from the City of Tacoma that Robison had bid on a federally aided contract administered by the City. After collecting copies of Robison's bid, we contacted the Attorney General's (AG's) Office for recommendations. OEO staff met with Gretchen White, Tom Nelson and the AG to decide on a course of action. It was decided that WSDOT will set aside the Robison agreement and re-impose the terms of the original sanctions to fine Robison \$94,000 and a suspension of bidding privileges for a period of 90 days.

### **BIG PIECE OF NEW FIRST AVENUE SOUTH BRIDGE INSTALLED**

On Saturday, Aug. 24, the second of two 750,000-pound steel bascule trusses that will span the Duwamish Waterway on the new First Avenue South Bridge was hoisted and bolted into place. The truss, which was placed on the north side of the river, is 126 feet long, 60 feet wide and 26 feet high. Together with its southern counterpart, will eventually support motorists as they drive across the bridge.

After resting in its horizontal position for five days to allow the newly poured concrete road deck to cure, the leaf was lifted to its vertical position reopening the waterway to marine

traffic. When completed in late 1996, the bridge will be the third longest double-leaf bascule bridge in the United States. With every bridge opening, the bridge's massive hydraulic cylinders will lift leaves weighing almost 5 million pounds each, some of the heaviest ever built.

### **REGIONAL COORDINATION STUDY INVOLVES FOUR STATES**

The Public Transportation Office has been managing a Federal Transit Authority (FTA) project aimed at analyzing barriers to coordination between programs sponsored by WSDOT and other agencies, such as the Department of Social and Health Services and State Public Instruction. The project was applied to the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. The project had three phases including statewide focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and a regional workshop which was held August 26 in Spokane, and was attended by 60 representatives from the four states. The workshop provided a forum to review the findings of the study, and also for representatives from each state to develop work plans for improving coordination in their respective states. There was clear consensus with the Washington representatives that WSDOT should be the lead agency. Further, a working group should be developed to guide future development and to propose any needed legislation. A final report from the study will be available after October 1, 1996.

### **AEA MEETING FOCUSES ON ADDRESSING CONCERNS**

Staff from the Commute Trip Reductions (CTR) office met with representatives from the American Electronics Association (AEA) CTR task force to listen to their concerns and provide information about the CTR program structure, current activities, and proposed changes. The AEA presented information on the CTR program to the Legislative Transportation Committee. They raised concerns about the laws, many of which are being addressed by the CTR Task Force.

### **TACOMA NARROWS/SR 16 UPDATE**

The summer travel pattern surveys for the SR 16/Tacoma Narrows corridor have been completed and a final report on the results is available. The results of the surveys on users of the bridge indicate that most of the travel begins and ends in the Pierce County area. Another video survey will begin the first week of October to determine any differences in travel between the summer season and the school season. This information will be used to evaluate various alternative solutions to traffic congestion in the corridor and for the studies identifying the voter boundary.

The Major Investment Study (MIS) is continuing with the completion of five public meetings to obtain comments on the problem statement, evaluation criteria and the initial set of alternative solutions. Over 750 people attended the meetings. Some of the comments from people indicated support for the north crossing (SR 518 extension) while there was also strong opposition to this alternative. People made suggestions on how to fix traffic today and also gave specific comments on the 14 alternatives that were presented. The alternatives include capacity improvements, transit, ferries, rail and a new corridor. A second public meeting was held in Burien on October 2, due to inadequate public notice of the first meeting. This second meeting is being held at no expense to the state.

### **SURVEYS HELP WITH PARK & RIDE IMPROVEMENTS**

Over 7,200 surveys were sent to users of targeted park and ride lots in King County, with 57% returned. A complete report of the results is available. The results indicate that

slightly over half (52%) of the respondents would be willing to pay at least \$1.00 for security and capacity improvements. Potential improvements that patrons considered very or extremely important include access to public telephones (62%), enclosed waiting areas (36%), access to public rest rooms (36%) and a parking attendant (31%). Evaluations also reveal that parking patrons consider the most important features and services to be parking availability (87%), vehicle and contents safety (85%), personal safety (84%) and frequency of bus service (81%). Another survey has been conducted of people who do not use the park and ride lots in order to understand potential market demand. These results will be available in October.

### **FREIGHT MOBILITY PARTNERSHIPS UPDATE**

Outreach Project. The first of five Freight Mobility Outreach work sessions was held September 24 in Spokane. About 20 people attended representing state and local government, private industry and agricultural associations. Jerry Lenzi, WSDOT Eastern Region Administrator, gave an overview of local and state freight issues. Commissioners Tompkins and Patterson spoke and also took part in the general discussions. Attendees provided input and comments during the half day session. The next outreach sessions will be in Richland on October 1, Seattle on October 7, Kelso on October 10, and Bellingham on October 16.

Stampede Pass. On September 25, 1996, the Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) released its decision that federal law pre-empts King County's authority to issue permits and require mitigation for Burlington Northern Santa Fe's (BNSF) construction work in King County on the Stampede Pass line. The decision states that: "there is no role for state and local agencies to play other than by participation in the federal environmental review process."

Auburn may file its own petition. The STB ruling clouds the status of the Auburn suit in state courts directed at King County and Kittitas County for not aggressively pursuing environmental review and requiring permits for BNSF's resumption of service on the Stampede Pass line. STB, under a separate proceeding, is reviewing and will decide whether BNSF can acquire and control the Washington Central Railroad Corporation (WCRC). As part of that proceeding, STB must conduct an environmental assessment of the "entire" Stampede Pass-WCRC line.

In yet another action, Auburn has indicated that it will formally ask the STB to condition BNSF's purchase of the WCRC on BNSF mitigating the impacts of increased freight rail operations in Auburn through construction of grade separations at several crossings. The STB is scheduled to hear arguments in mid-October and issue a final decision on BNSF's purchase of WCRC by the end of October.

### **QUALITY ITEMS:**

#### **TEAMWORK FACILITATED COST SAVINGS & GREAT PRODUCT**

In May, a team of Southwest Region maintenance personnel was asked to develop and establish a new process of completing a series of chip seal projects region-wide utilizing assistance from the local maintenance section personnel. The work started in July and ended in August. The production and cost data was gathered through September. The end product yielded a uniform appearance at a consistent rate of 5.5 miles per day at a complete

cost of \$0.91 per square yard. The Southwest Region felt this was a very successful effort and will reward this team at a luncheon in their honor in October.

### **WSF HAS QUALITY AWARENESS**

The Washington State Ferries Quality Facilitators offered two unique Awareness workshops during September for the Administrative Services Department of the Ferries. The three, half day sessions of the Q2000 workshop were customized from the one day Awareness class. This unique format incorporated "homework assignments" related to current work processes into the Awareness curriculum. The participants used the tools in their natural work environment and then returned the following day to the workshop to share what they learned from using the quality tools on the job. The facilitators will share more detailed information at the upcoming WSDOT All Facilitators conference on November 4th.

Five Washington State Ferries fleet employees were certified as facilitators of the Q2000 Quality Awareness workshop. This was especially exciting to encourage fleet participation to assist taking the quality concepts to the other 1300 fleet employees. From above deck the facilitators are a Relief Mate and an Able Bodied Seaman. From below deck are two Chief Engineers, one from the Passenger Only Boats. Rounding up our fleet facilitators is a Terminal Ticket Seller. The WSF Director of Human Resources is contacting the unions in October prior to any classes, to inform them of the Quality Advantage program.

### **QUALITY TRAINING RESULTS IN QUALITY INVESTIGATIONS**

In an effort to improve the quality of conducting complaint investigations, the entire OEO staff attended training on Investigating Discrimination Complaints on Title VI, VII, Section 504/Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and DBE. The training was conducted by Willie Harris, Southwest Region Civil Rights Director. Also in attendance were representatives from WSDOT's Audit and Consultant Services Offices, OMWBE, AG's Office, Washington State Patrol and Idaho DOT. The role of the investigator was thoroughly explored and the organizational skills outlined for the successful completion of a complaint investigation.

### **GOOD NEWS ITEMS:**

#### **SOUTH DUPONT INTERCHANGE CEREMONY HELD**

A ground breaking ceremony was held on September 26 for the new South DuPont Exit 118. A crowd of 75+ gathered to hear DuPont Mayor Willard Shenkel, Secretary Morrison and Weyerhaeuser Real Estate Company's Bob Shedd comment on the successful teamwork, partnership efforts and economic benefits related to the new interchange. Construction of the new modified-diamond interchange began on September 30, just 13 and one-half months from the day the project began, and more than two months ahead of the schedule promised to Intel. An Open to Traffic date of October 1997 is scheduled.

#### **INTERAGENCY PROJECT HELPS FISH TRAVEL EASIER**

The Olympic Region participated in a project by the Department of Fish and Wildlife to improve the passage of fish under SR 112 near Neah Bay. Olympic Region crews built a 60-foot long Bailey Bridge to detour traffic while Fish and Wildlife replaced three four-foot diameter pipes under SR 112 with a bottomless concrete arch culvert. The pipe outlets, which carry Rasmussen Creek into the Straits of Juan de Fuca, were above the creek and interfered with fish passage, except during high tide. The new bottomless culvert will



allow free flow of the creek and provide fish with a more natural pathway. Installation of the culvert was completed on September 24 and Olympic Region crews removed the Bailey Bridge on September 30.

#### **COMMENDATION LETTER SENT TO MAINTENANCE PERSONNEL**

North Central Region maintenance personnel received a letter of commendation from Washington State Patrol Captain Tom Robbins for their quick action in diverting traffic away from I-90 west of Moses Lake. State troopers were pursuing a suspect who had stabbed the Kittitas County Sheriff and stole the sheriff's vehicle. Keith Walker and his staff were aware of the pursuit, diverted traffic as troopers set up a spike strip which disabled the suspect's vehicle, and contributed greatly to the apprehension of the suspect. No damage or injury occurred to the motoring public.

#### **LUGGAGE MAKES IT HOME FROM ROAD TRIP**

Gary Holly, maintenance lead tech with area 1 in the North Central Region, found a piece of luggage on SR97A and was able to return it to the vacationers who lost it. The Shapiros of Portland wrote, "Even though we were not able to retrieve two other pieces of luggage, we are just so happy to see such honest and helpful people around, such as your road crew."

#### **GOALS & STRATEGY DOCUMENT FOR SR 14 FINALIZED**

On Friday September 20, 1996, the final wording to the Goals and Strategy document for the SR-14 Corridor Management Plan was agreed upon and all the partners signed the agreement. This action finalizes the guiding vision, goals, and objectives which grant equal recognition to the mandates of safety and aesthetics in an area of unique scenic and cultural significance. Cooperating agencies are WSDOT, The Columbia River Gorge Commission, USDA Forest Service, Skamania and Klickitat Counties, and the Southwest Regional Transportation Council. The next phase begins immediately with a survey of historic transportation features, a truck survey, the development of Design Guidelines, and a Route Development Plan for SR-14 through the Columbia River Gorge.

#### **WSDOT BRIDGE BRINGS HOME AWARD**

The Hoffstadt Creek Bridge on the SR504 Mount St. Helen Highway has won an Award of Merit in the 1996 AISC Prize Bridge Competition for Long Span Bridges. The bridges were judged by an independent panel on aesthetics, economics, design and engineering solutions.

#### **"DOCUTECH" BRINGS HIGH-TECH COPYING TO WSDOT**

The new DocuTech copier is in full production offering the latest in copier technology to customers. During the first two months of operation, the copier averaged 950,000 copies per month. The main advantage this copier offers is that it scans the originals one time, places the images in memory, and then prints from that memory. It allows the operator to scan in jobs while a job is printing, resulting in increased daily production. The copier can store the information regarding a job in its memory indefinitely, allowing customers to print the number of copies that are needed at a time, rather than trying to meet a price break point. This has resulted in fewer waste copies being produced, and has reduced the storage space necessary for pre-printed information. The machine is networked and able to accept printing jobs from local workstations and can send printing jobs directly to the copier resulting in better quality copies. Procedures and training on sending printing projects directly to the copier will be available when we complete testing. The network connection should be completely operational by the first week of October.

#### **PERMIT ISSUED FOR TERMINAL PROJECT**

Washington State Ferries was granted a shoreline permit (with some minor added conditions) September 3rd, after a lengthy effort to secure the permit from the city of Edmonds. The permit allows WSF to execute a terminal project which will provide overhead loading for vessel passengers. The City review process has been helped by the participation of the DOT, Rail Branch, Environmental Service Center, Office of Urban Mobility, Northwest Region Office, Transportation Commission, Office of the Secretary, Legislative Members, and constant flow of information from Washington State Ferries vessel, planning, budget and foremost terminal staff.

### **ANNUAL REPORT IN EARLY & BEARING GOOD NEWS**

The Annual Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Report is complete and providing a “snapshot” of the state’s workforce on WSDOT/FHWA road construction projects. The numbers are provided by contractors based on their last payroll period in July. Of 5,911 employees, 947 (16%) were minorities and 850 (14%) were women. These utilization statistics are very similar to last year’s, indicating consistent overall participation by protected group members on WSDOT projects.

### **WORK GROUP FORMED TO IMPROVE PROJECT SCHEDULING PROCESS**

Another natural work group has formed in the Northwest Region which will be looking into improving the current Project Development project scheduling process. The work group consists of individuals from the Program Management program monitoring unit and the Project Development project scheduling unit.

The work group is currently in the process of defining the existing process and its customer/supplier chains. They will use the seven-step Quality Blueprint method for improvement. One of the next steps for the work group is to design a model of the improved scheduling system for new process simulation purposes. The simulation (or test) should provide measurement data on the new system to determine if it will add value to the current scheduling process.

### **COMMUTE TRIP REDUCTION PROGRAM CONTINUING TO GROW**

Whatcom County became number nine and the newest county subject to the requirements of the state Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law. According to projections from the Office of Financial Management, the county’s population passed the 150,000 person threshold, triggering participation in the program.